

Practice Points

Ten Ways To Do More Orthodontics Immediately

By June Williamson, RDH

Educate your staff — The most effective way to do more ortho is to have all of your team 100% behind you. This includes your front office staff, dental assistants, treatment co-ordinators and dental hygienist. Let them educate the patients, identify pathologies, know the procedures and fees, what to say and what not to say! Do not assume they have the knowledge. When your staff members are smart, you look even smarter!

Educate your patients — Tell your patients you offer orthodontics as part of promoting and maintaining oral and overall health. You and your staff can do this verbally, however, in a busy practice this sometimes does not happen. Visual aids are great! Try putting before and after photos on walls. Use your intra-oral camera. Take advantage of your reception room by installing a patient education system that uses video and early treatment orthodontic brochures. Develop a newsletter and practice brochure, and make sure every patient gets one. Soon your patients will be asking for treatment for their children, themselves, family and friends.

Organize your procedures and schedule — Develop a systematic and organized way to implement ortho as a part of your practice. Schedule your orthodontic patients on a given day or time frame. Separate your ortho records from your general practice records. Each procedure should have a systematic way of being scheduled and performed. Have daily and weekly staff meetings to reinforce all systems. Once you and your staff are organized, you will be excited as your orthodontic practice grows.

Delegate — Do not try to do everything yourself. Most procedures in an orthodontic practice can be delegated to a trained staff member. Be patient. Compliment them for a job well done and criticize constructively when they need to improve. Your staff, once educated and excited about ortho, will take pride in their work, want to do more and will continually recommend orthodontics in your practice.

Screen ALL patients on recall — Your hygienists are key patient educators. They spend the most time with the patients and parents. They **MUST** be trained to identify mal-occlusions, document what they see and tip you off so you can support the findings. Make an orthodontic screening a mandatory part of every recall exam. Your records will be more comprehensive and your ortho practice will grow.

Measure — One way to get excited about orthodontics is to know that it is a profitable part of your practice. Assign a producer number to your orthodontic practice so generating

reports is easy. Set goals with your team and try and surpass these goals. Keep track of the number of active ortho patients and record the number of new ones. This will give you the information needed to monitor the growth of your practice.

Think Prevention — If every time you and your staff examine a patient you ask yourselves, “What are we preventing from occurring or what are we preventing from getting worse?” you will be able to give your patients several reasons for treatment. An underdeveloped arch left untreated will not only contribute to a crowding problem, but may also cause an airway problem, snoring, sleep apnea, cross-bite, TMD, traumatic occlusion, poor posture, headaches, neckaches, earaches, etc. Patients and parents are more likely to accept treatment recommendations when they are educated about prevention as it relates to their overall health.

Do not allow insurance coverage to influence proper treatment — Too often comprehensive treatment plans are not recommended because the doctor and staff shy away from making recommendations based on the cost and whether it will be covered by insurance. Treat all patients equally. Never assume the financial status of your patients and do not treatment plan based on insurance coverage. Concentrate on educating your patients about the importance of treatment. They will respect your recommended concerns of what is best for the patient, no matter what the cost.

Keep abreast of new procedures and techniques — Technological advances in orthodontics continue to make our procedures easier and more effective. When treatment time is decreased and results are increased and more predictable, doctors, staff and patients are happier. Do not resist change. Continue to take courses and attend study clubs in orthodontics and tell your patients all about it when you get back!

Build your confidence — Make orthodontics part of your world. Of course, the more ortho you do, the more confident you will be when recommending orthodontics. Be confident that the patients are going to accept your treatment plan and encourage your staff to “toot your horn” for you. Soon your confidence will be your key to success.



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